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You Know?

I Know. Shake!

Vance C. Criss



THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY

Successful Rural Plays

A Strong List From Which to Select Your
Next Play

FARM FOLKS. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. For five male and six female characters. Time of playing, two hours and a half. One simple exterior, two easy interior scenes. Costumes, modern. Flora Goodwin, a farmer's daughter, is engaged to Philip Burleigh, a young New Yorker. Philip's mother wants him to marry a society woman, and by falsehoods makes Flora believe Philip does not love her. Dave Weston, who wants Flora himself, helps the deception by intercepting a letter from Philip to Flora. She agrees to marry Dave, but on the eve of their marriage Dave confesses, Philip learns the truth, and he and Flora are reunited. It is a simple plot, but full of speeches and situations that sway an audience alternately to tears and to laughter.

HOME TIES. A Rural Play in Four Acts, by ARTHUR LEWIS TUBBS. Characters, four male, five female. Plays two hours and a half. Scene, a simple interior—same for all four acts. Costumes, modern. One of the strongest plays Mr. Tubbs has written. Martin Winn's wife left him when his daughter Ruth was a baby. Harold Vincent, the nephew and adopted son of the man who has wronged Martin, makes love to Ruth Winn. She is also loved by Len Everett, a prosperous young farmer. When Martin discovers who Harold is, he orders him to leave Ruth. Harold, who does not love sincerely, yields. Ruth discovers she loves Len, but thinks she has lost him also. Then he comes back, and Ruth finds her happiness.

THE OLD NEW HAMPSHIRE HOME. A New England Drama in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For seven males and four females. Time, two hours and a half. Costumes, modern. A play with a strong heart interest and pathos, yet rich in humor. Easy to act and very effective. A rural drama of the "Old Homestead" and "Way Down East" type. Two exterior scenes, one interior, all easy to set. Full of strong situations and delightfully humorous passages. The kind of a play everybody understands and likes.

THE OLD DAIRY HOMESTEAD. A Rural Comedy in Three Acts, by FRANK DUMONT. For five males and four females. Time, two hours. Rural costumes. Scenes rural exterior and interior. An adventurer obtains a large sum of money from a farm house through the intimidation of the farmer's niece, whose husband he claims to be. Her escapes from the wiles of the villain and his female accomplice are both starting and novel.

A WHITE MOUNTAIN BOY. A Strong Melodrama in Five Acts, by CHARLES TOWNSEND. For seven males and four females, and three supers. Time, two hours and twenty minutes. One exterior, three interiors. Costumes easy. The hero, a country lad, twice saves the life of a banker's daughter, which results in their betrothal. A scoundrelly clerk has the banker in his power, but the White Mountain boy finds a way to checkmate his schemes, saves the banker, and wins the girl.

**THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY
PHILADELPHIA**

You Know? I Know. Shake!

A Farce in One Act

By
VANCE C. CRISS



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You Know? I Know. Shakes
FEB 24 1922

You Know? I Know. Shake!

CHARACTERS

NED NEWCOME,

*who desires to keep his recent marriage a secret
from his wealthy uncle*

ALICE NEWCOME,

*his wife, who desires to keep her recent marriage
a secret from her wealthy aunt*

JOHN PERKINS...the uncle, who arrives unexpectedly
ABIGAIL WALTON.....the aunt, who isn't far behind

TIME OF PLAYING.—Half an hour.

STORY OF THE PLAY

A young artist with a rich uncle marries a young girl with a rich aunt. They keep both of the old people ignorant of the fact, fearing that their allowances may be cut off. Then word is received from the uncle that he is coming to call on his nephew. The same day the aunt informs her niece that she is coming to see her. In order to deceive them the wife poses as her husband's model and the husband poses as his wife's butler, but finally all turns out well and the aunt and uncle shake hands. The play is full of action and lively dialogue.

TIME.—The present.

PLACE.—The Newcome apartment.

You Know? I Know. Shake!

SCENE.—*A living-room. There are two doors, one, at the right, opening into the hall, and one, at the left, leading to the other rooms of the apartment. There is a settee down-stage right, an arm chair down-stage left, and, just to the right of this, a small reading table. Up-stage, may be placed a piano, book shelves, etc. Upon the wall, at left, is a telephone, with a speaking tube near by. A lay-figure stands just up-stage from the door at the right.*

(As the curtain rises, NED, on the settee, is engrossed in a newspaper. ALICE enters at L., halting just inside the door.)

ALICE. I'm making beaten biscuits for lunch. How do you like them?

NED (*behind his paper*). So they can be eaten.

ALICE. I like that. (*Goes to chair and sits.*) If we hadn't been married almost a month, I'd be angry.

NED (*laying aside paper and smiling*). Since you feel that way about it, I'll say that I like beaten biscuits any way you cook them. (*Picks up paper.*) I was just noticing, in the stock market quotations, that Western Consolidated has advanced another five points. It's too bad Uncle John isn't here to tell some of his cronies, "I told you so."

ALICE. I'm not a bit sorry he isn't here. The last thing he told you before he left was that he'd find a wife for you as soon as he got back, and you know very well what he'll say when he finds you and I are married. I hope he stays in South America forever.

NED. You're no better pleased over his absence

than I am over your sharp-tongued old aunt's being in California. When she does learn you're my wife, her language may not be as strong as Uncle John's—but it'll be just as much to the point.

ALICE. Thank goodness, we don't need to worry. Your uncle has no way of finding out about our marriage, and as long as I'm receiving mail in my former name at the old address, Aunt Abigail won't learn anything. (*Crosses to NED, and seats herself on left arm of settee.*) Do you know, dear, I wish you wouldn't be quite so friendly with that model—the pretty one, I mean. I know you don't mean anything, but she's apt to presume. And I just can't keep from thinking a model is a detestable creature.

NED. You shouldn't feel that way, honey. The girl is really deserving, and an artist has to have a model. (*Telephone bell rings.*)

ALICE. I'll answer it. (*Crosses to 'phone and places receiver at ear.*) Hello.—Yes.—Yes, he's here. I'll call him. (*Turns toward NED, with receiver still at her ear, but turns again to transmitter.*) What?—No, I'm not the janitor's wife. (*Holding out receiver, she faces NED.*) The insulting wretch. He wanted to know if I was the janitor's wife. Come and talk to him.

NED. Good Lord! That sounds like Uncle John. (*Goes to 'phone.*) Hello.—Yes. (*Places hand over transmitter, and turns to ALICE, who is standing at his right.*) It is. It's Uncle John. (*Again talking over 'phone.*) Yes, yes, I heard you.—Who was what woman?—Oh, you mean the one who answered the 'phone?—Certainly I'll tell you who she is.—Why don't I?—She is—she is—(*As if by inspiration.*) one of my models. (*ALICE silently expresses her indignation.*) You're at the hotel?—You're coming right out?—Oh, you needn't bother. I'll be right down, and we can lunch together at the hotel.—Of course you'll be welcome.—Sure. Come ahead.—Good-bye. (*Hangs up receiver and turns dejectedly to ALICE.*) We're lost. Uncle John's coming

right out. He'll be here in less than three minutes. What on earth can we do? If he finds a woman making her home here, the lawyers won't find my name in his will.

ALICE. You needn't think I'm going to move out, just because of your cranky old uncle. (*Crosses to settee and sits.*) This is my home, and I'm going to stay here. (*Begins to sob.*)

NED (*crosses to settee, sits left of ALICE, and puts arm about her shoulders.*). You'll do that for my sake, won't you? And there's no telling what Uncle John will say or do, if he finds out.

ALICE. I don't care; I'm going to stay. When I married you, I never thought you'd let me be insulted this way by a crabbed old uncle—even if he is rich.

NED. But he hasn't insulted you yet, and that's what I'm trying to prevent. You won't mind leaving for just a little while, will you?

ALICE (*stamping her foot*). I won't budge an inch.

NED (*dejectedly*). All right, then. There's just one way out of it. I told Uncle John over the 'phone that you were a model, and you'll have to be a model while he's here.

ALICE (*indignantly*). I won't be a model. You know what I think of models, and you know what your odious old uncle thought, when you told him I was a model. I won't be a model.

NED (*pleadingly*). Won't you, honey, just for a little while? If your aunt came, I'd be anything or do anything, if it would help you out.

ALICE (*brightening*). Would you, honestly?

NED (*eagerly*). Sure. You just send for her, and see.

ALICE. For your sake, dear, I'll do it.

NED (*in alarm*). You don't mean you'll send for her, just to try me?

ALICE. Of course not, goose. I mean I'll be a model. (*There is a knock at the door, R.*)

NED. There he is. (*Rises.*)

ALICE (*rises excitedly*). What shall I do?

NED (*pushes her to L.*). Anything except act like my wife. Leave the rest to me.

(*Goes to door and opens it.*)

UNCLE JOHN (*enters, carrying light overcoat over left arm and hat in left hand*). Hello, my boy. How are you? (*He and NED shake hands.*)

NED. Let me take your coat and hat.

UNCLE JOHN. Just the coat. (*Hands coat to him. Notices NED's dejection as he hangs coat on costumer and crosses to c.*) Thunderation! What's the matter? I thought you'd be glad to see your old uncle, and you stand there like a hired mourner at a funeral. (*Notices ALICE, who stands at L.*) Oh ho, I see now. Evidently I interrupted a *tête-à-tête* with the pretty model. (*Crosses to ALICE.*) By Jove, he's a lucky dog. (*Chucks her under the chin. She smiles, and NED glares indignantly at him.*) UNCLE JOHN then turns to NED, who tries to look pleasant, while ALICE, in her turn, glares.) Better be careful, my boy. I've come back to find a wife for you, and if you get too interested in a model, the woman I select may not be much interested in you.

NED (*weakly*). Uncle John, don't you think I might like to have a little something to say about choosing my wife?

UNCLE JOHN. Shucks, no. You never did have any judgment in anything like that. (*ALICE is more indignant than ever, and NED has difficulty in concealing his displeasure.*) By the way, (*Looks at watch.*) I have a business engagement that will take a few minutes. I'll go attend to that and return for you. Then we'll go out to lunch together.

NED. But you must take lunch here.

UNCLE JOHN (*surprised*). Take lunch here! Great guns, man, you're no cook, and I couldn't boil water. I want something to eat.

NED. Yes, but my w —

ALICE. Ahem.

NED. My—my model is a very good cook, and often prepares meals for me here.

UNCLE JOHN. Great mackerel! This is getting serious. The first thing you know, you'll play the fool and marry this model—and that means not one cent from me. This thing's got to stop. I'm going now, but I'll have some more to say when I get back.

(*Jams hat on and exits R., slamming door behind him.*)

ALICE (*sinks into chair*). Thank heaven, he's gone.

NED (*sinks upon settee*). Yes, he's gone; but what he has said won't be a circumstance to what he will say. There's only one thing to do, and that's to get rid of him—but I don't know how we're going to do it.

ALICE. I'll tell you. Couldn't you pretend to have smallpox, or something like that? He wouldn't stay here then.

NED. No, and neither would I—after some one around here tore up a telephone getting the city health department. We'll have to find some other way.

(*There is a whistle at the speaking tube. ALICE answers.*)

ALICE. Hello.—Oh.—(*Acts as if about to fall.*) Y-e-s, come right up. (*Turns to NED.*) Now we are lost. That was Aunt Abigail.

(*Returns to chair and sinks dejectedly.*)

NED (*rises*). And when she and Uncle John meet, heaven help us.

ALICE. They mustn't meet. We've got to prevent it.

NED. We'd better find out first how you're going to explain me.

ALICE (*suddenly*). I'll tell you. You be the butler.

NED (*indignantly*). I'll not be a confounded servant.

ALICE. You said you would—and you've got to.

(*Door at R. opens and AUNT ABIGAIL enters. Sees ALICE, who has risen, drops hand-bag on floor, rushes to her and embraces her.*)

AUNT ABIGAIL. My dear, I had a terrible time with the janitor. You should see that he is discharged at once. He insisted there was no Miss Westcott in the building. You see, I went to your old apartment first, and learned you had moved here.

ALICE (*nervously glancing at NED, who has retreated up-stage R.*). Let me help you off with your coat, Aunt Abigail.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*removes hat and coat*). To be sure. (*ALICE places hat and cloak on table.*) Since I'm going to remain some time, I may as well make myself at home. (*Glances around, and sees NED.*) Who is that person? You, unchaperoned, allowing a gentleman —

ALICE (*trying to appear amused*). But he isn't a gentleman.

(NED starts to protest, but is motioned to silence by ALICE.)

AUNT ABIGAIL (*weakly*). Not a gentleman? That's even —

ALICE. It's all right, Aunt Abigail; he's the butler.

AUNT ABIGAIL. The butler! How—how—dreadful! So this is where your new-fangled ideas are leading you?

ALICE (*relieved*). Yes, that's all it is. Modern woman is emancipated.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Emancipated? Pooh! Do you call it emancipation to degrade yourself to the level of a man? (*Notices pipe upon table.*) Whose pipe is that?

ALICE. Oh, that belongs to my h—

NED. Ahem.

ALICE. To my butler.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Well, of all things. The very idea of permitting the servants such liberty. I consider it very fortunate that I came at such an opportune time. (*Notices coat on costumer.*) Whose coat is that?

ALICE. That belongs to my—my butler's uncle.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Why don't you turn over the en-

tire place to your butler and his relatives? (*Surveys NED.*) I have no doubt from his appearance that he has a plentiful supply.

NED (*angrily*). Madam, I assure —

AUNT ABIGAIL. That will do. If my niece has permitted you some foolish liberties, you may rest assured that you will keep your place while I am here.

NED. By George —

AUNT ABIGAIL. Sir!

ALICE (*nervously*). Aunt Abigail, hadn't I better show you to your room? Probably you'll want to rest a few minutes before lunch.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Certainly, my dear. (*NED picks up hand-bag.*) I'll take that. (*Relieves NED of hand-bag and follows ALICE to door, L., where she pauses.*) You must dismiss that insolent servant. His mere presence annoys me.

(*Exits, L., after ALICE.*)

NED (*dejectedly*). Heavens and earth! If she would fire me as a butler, what wouldn't she do to me if she knew I was Alice's husband?

(*Crosses to chair, L., and sits.*)

ALICE (*enters L. and goes at once to left of NED*). What are we going to do?

NED (*angrily*). There's only one thing left—kill Uncle John, cut Aunt Abigail's throat, and then telephone the police.

ALICE. You mustn't feel that way. Everything will come out all right in the end.

NED. Yes, there's lots of consolation in looking for mercy, after we're both dead.

ALICE (*seats herself on left arm of chair and puts her arm about NED's shoulders*). Please don't talk that way, dear. It makes me nervous.

NED. If my talk has that effect on you, think what effect your beloved aunt's talk must have on me.

ALICE. But that isn't helping us out of our predicament. Can't you suggest something?

AUNT ABIGAIL (*enters L.*). My dear, I forgot to ask you— (*Sees ALICE hurriedly rise from chair and step L.*) Oh! Oh! Can I believe my eyes! (*Crosses to c., then turns upon ALICE.*) What has caused you to lose your reason, your modesty? Are you dead to all sense of shame? Such dreadful conduct—and with a mere servant. Oh! Oh! Would that I had died before witnessing the disgrace of my nearest and dearest relative.

ALICE (*nervously*). Aunt Abigail, you must let me explain.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Explain! Explain! How can you explain, when I have seen with my own eyes?

NED (*rises and strides R.*). Confound such a meddling old—

ALICE (*in alarm*). Sir!

AUNT ABIGAIL. What did you say?

NED (*at R., suddenly realizes, and faces the aunt*). I said she had been very good to me. And it hasn't been altogether without reason, either. Didn't I save her life?

ALICE (*excitedly*). Yes, he saved my life, Aunt Abigail. Didn't I tell you about it? And that's the reason I employed him as a butler. And he's had so much trouble lately. You see, his mother died, and his father died,—and—and his wife died, too.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*somewhat mollified*). I suppose you really should be kind to the fellow—but I can't see why you should act so shamelessly as to suggest that you'd like to be the second wife—or the third one, for all I know. (*Becomes angry again.*) And I must say that the more I look at him, the more surprised I am at your conduct. His face is the very picture of a gallows thief.

NED (*angrily*). Confound—

AUNT ABIGAIL (*icily*). You will speak only when spoken to. (*To ALICE.*) I presume, in view of your conduct, I should remain here as a chaperone, but I must go to my room a few minutes, at least, to recover from the shock, or I shall faint. (*Exits L.*)

(ALICE sinks into chair and begins to sob. NED crosses L. and seats himself on right arm of chair, putting his arm about ALICE'S shoulders.)

NED. Don't feel that way about it, honey. We'll come out all right in the end.

ALICE (*sobbingly*). Yes—but you said—there wasn't any reason—to hope.

NED (*consolingly*). But I didn't mean that. Just be brave, and we'll get out somehow.

ALICE. I'll have to explain—or Aunt Abigail—will think—I'm lost.

NED (*excitedly*). Merciful heavens! Don't do that now. Her nerves aren't in any condition for a shock like that.

UNCLE JOHN (*enters R., hangs hat on costumer and advances to C., where, seeing NED and ALICE, he pauses amazed*). Well! (NED rises and retreats up-stage L. ALICE rises and retreats L.) This is going too far. I'm not going to stand for any monkey business like this.

NED (*points to wife, who is sobbing*). Surely, Uncle John, you don't blame me for —

UNCLE JOHN (*storming*). Oh, no, of course I don't blame you, you young idiot. Don't you know the wiles of creatures like her? They can spot a sucker as far as they can see him. Then a few tears and he's hooked—absolutely hooked. You've got to get rid of this young woman, and in a hurry, too. I'm going to see that you don't get caught by any such creature as she is. (*Points to ALICE*.)

NED. Uncle John, I won't stand —

UNCLE JOHN. Then, by thunder, you can sit. I'm running this job. (*Sees bonnet and cloak on table. Turns to ALICE*.) Young woman, there are your wraps. Get 'em on in a hurry and get out.

ALICE (*sobbing*). They're—they're not mine.

UNCLE JOHN (*turns fiercely on NED*). Sir, explain immediately. Is there another woman here?

NED (*nervously*). Yes, sir. Those wraps belong to my—my model's aunt.

UNCLE JOHN (*again storming*). Great Cæsar's ghost! Do you think we're running a home for the dependent relatives of designing women?

ALICE. I'm going home. I won't be insulted in this way—(*To NED.*) and in your presence, too.

(*Rushes out door, L.*)

NED. Now see what you've done. I'll have a nice time persuading her to stay, won't I?

(*Rushes out in pursuit of wife.*)

UNCLE JOHN. By Jove, I'll go offer her a little more comfort. (*Rushes to door, L., and halts.*) No, I won't. The more I say now, the more apt that young fool is to marry that little whipper-snapper. (*Strides angrily across to R.*) It's a good thing I came when I did. A week more and she would have had him.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*enters L., and pauses*). Look here, fellow, what have you done to cause my niece so much anguish?

UNCLE JOHN. Say, who are you? But you needn't answer. You're the aunt of that creature.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*advances to c.*). How dare you? But you needn't offer any explanation. Your face bears very plainly the marks of your low origin.

UNCLE JOHN (*advances toward AUNT ABIGAIL*). Look here, old woman, I'll not see my nephew caught in any of your blackmailing schemes. Now get out of here in a hurry, or I'll call the police.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*in a frenzy*). Old woman! Old woman! You'll—you'll call the police! How dare you order me out, you ill-mannered, low-born, despicable wretch, you. (*Crosses to chair and seats herself. Points to door, R.*) There's the door, fellow. Now go.

UNCLE JOHN (*surveys her in amazement*). Well, I'll be hanged. (*Angrily.*) You screeching old hussy, I'll stay here as long as I please.

(UNCLE JOHN *takes out cigar, lights it, and begins to puff vigorously, all his movements betraying anger.*

He walks back and forth, making a pretense of humming a tune. After he has walked across the room once or twice, AUNT ABIGAIL begins to cough. He looks at her with an expression of malignant satisfaction.)

AUNT ABIGAIL. You contemptible wretch—
(Coughs.) how dare you smoke—(Coughs.) in the presence of a lady? (Coughs.)

UNCLE JOHN. Old woman— (Puffs.) I never smoke in the presence— (Puffs.) of a lady. (Puffs.)

AUNT ABIGAIL (*distractedly*). Oh, I shall faint. I know I shall.

(NED and ALICE enter L., and cross to up-stage c., NED at L., ALICE at R. UNCLE JOHN advances to down-stage R.)

UNCLE JOHN (*to NED*). Look here, you worthless young reprobate, if you ever expect the slightest favor from me, you send that young hussy (*Points to ALICE*) and that she-devil (*Points to AUNT*) out of this house at once.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*to ALICE*). Young lady, unless you expect to be disowned this minute, you get rid of that miscreant gawking there by you and that penitentiary-faced old weasel over there.

(*Points to UNCLE JOHN*.)

UNCLE JOHN (*to NED*). You conscienceless scapegrace, I believe you're in love with that—that person there by you.

NED (*nervously*). Why, Uncle John, how—how foolish. You should see the young lady in whom I'm—I'm—slightly interested.

ALICE. Oh!

UNCLE JOHN (*to ALICE*). Ah, I see. I'm not surprised to see you jealous at losing such a good thing.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Niece, can it be possible that you have so far forgotten yourself as to fall in love with that unmentionable person? (*Points to NED*.)

ALICE. Why, Aunt Abigail! You know I wouldn't do that. Didn't I tell you in my last letter about the

young western millionaire who's been urging me to—to—elope with him?

NED. What!

UNCLE JOHN (*to NED*). So you're jealous, too, are you?

NED. I can't stand this. (*Rushes out door, L.*)

ALICE. I can't, either.

(*Rushes out door, L., in pursuit of NED.*)

AUNT ABIGAIL (*calls after her*). Come back here this instant. You shan't speak to that creature again.

UNCLE JOHN Oh, shucks. Your bluff won't work. I'm going to finish your little game.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Well, of all the nerve. The idea of your nephew's presumption in aspiring to the hand of my niece.

UNCLE JOHN. What do you think of that! Now that you're losing out, you'll change your game, eh? That's a good joke, my nephew's presuming to ask the hand of your niece. Ha, ha, ha. If somebody doesn't hold my sides, I'll laugh until I burst. Ha, ha.

NED (*enters L., and advances to R. C., followed by ALICE, who stands at L. C.*). I tell you, I won't stand for it.

ALICE. But I tell you, there wasn't a thing to it.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*crosses to left of ALICE*). Look here, young lady, what do you mean by speaking in a pleading tone to that wretch?

ALICE (*wildly*). Oh, I don't know what I mean by anything any more. (*Rushes out door, L.*)

AUNT ABIGAIL. Don't think you'll give me the slip that way. (*Rushes after ALICE.*)

UNCLE JOHN. I think I need a little fresh air, myself. (*Advances to costumer and takes hat.*) I'll be back after you very shortly.

(*Exit, R.*)

NED (*suddenly brightening*). I believe I'll tell him. (*Goes to door, R., and calls.*) Uncle John, Uncle John.

UNCLE JOHN (*outside*). What do you want?

NED. Come back a minute. I have something to tell you.

UNCLE JOHN (*enters, r.*). Go ahead.

NED (*leads UNCLE JOHN down-stage, c.*). Uncle John, how'd you like to get even with that old woman for saying such mean things about you?

UNCLE JOHN (*eagerly*). By George, I'd give anything to do that.

NED. Then I'll tell you all about it. She isn't what you think she is at all. She's Miss Abigail Walton, called the wealthiest woman of the wealthy west.

UNCLE JOHN. She is?

NED. Yes; and that young woman is her niece.

UNCLE JOHN. What? And a model?

NED. Of course not. She isn't a model at all. Give me a chance to explain. You see, she has her own ideas about selecting a husband. So has her aunt. The aunt has a man picked out for her niece, and thinks she will marry him.

UNCLE JOHN. Well?

NED. But she won't.

UNCLE JOHN. Why not?

NED. Because she's already married to another man, and I'm helping her keep the marriage a secret from her aunt.

UNCLE JOHN. And the old woman, who thinks her niece is going to marry the man she has picked out, doesn't know she's already married?

NED. That's it exactly.

UNCLE JOHN. Ha, ha, ha. Say, that's a good one. By George, I like to see these old codgers get slipped up when they try to make matches. But who's the lucky fellow? Who's the girl's husband?

NED. I am.

UNCLE JOHN (*angrily*). What! Why, you confounded young reprobate, you won't get — (Stops abruptly, and a smile slowly overspreads his face.) Say, the old woman isn't the only one the joke is on, is she?

NED (*joyously*). Then you'll forgive me?

UNCLE JOHN. Sure. I went into the trap head-first, didn't I?

NED. You're a brick, Uncle John. But listen just a minute more. For the sake of my wife, help us keep Aunt Abigail in the dark. I'm supposed to be the butler while she's around. You'll play the part of the butler's uncle a little while, won't you—to keep up the joke?

UNCLE JOHN. Sure I will, (*Nudges him in ribs.*) to keep up the joke. Come on; let's get outside and plan what we're going to do. Since you caught me so easily, I'll be a good sport and help out.

(*They exit, R., and the door is no sooner closed than ALICE, sobbing, enters, L. She crosses to settee and sits.*)

ALICE. I just can't stand that horrid old Uncle John any longer. And Aunt Abigail thinks I'm disgraced forever. There's just one thing left, and that's to tell Aunt Abigail. And I'm going to do it right now.

(*Rises and starts toward door, L., just as AUNT ABIGAIL enters, L.*)

AUNT ABIGAIL. Young lady, what's the matter? You look as if you actually had been crying merely because I told you to discharge that wretched butler with the unmentionable old uncle.

ALICE. Aunt Abigail, you don't understand. Come and sit down over here while I explain everything.

(*They sit upon the settee, AUNT ABIGAIL at the left, ALICE at the right.*)

AUNT ABIGAIL. I think it's about time.

ALICE. First of all, the young man I said was the butler isn't the butler at all.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*horrified*). What!

ALICE. He's Ned Newcome, the artist whose pictures recently made such a hit in London.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Merciful heavens, Alice, this is outrageous. To think of your permitting an artist to come here when you are unchaperoned. I shall faint, I know I shall.

ALICE. I tell you there isn't anything improper about his coming here.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*stiffly*). And why not, pray tell?

ALICE. Because—because—he's my husband.

AUNT ABIGAIL. What!

ALICE. We've been married almost a month, but we haven't told any of our friends.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Why not?

ALICE. Well, you see, Ned's uncle, that mean old—old—thing who's been here this morning, threatened to disinherit Ned if he didn't marry the girl he had picked out. That's why we married secretly and didn't tell anyone.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Did that insulting old wretch of an uncle dare to object to you?

ALICE. Yes.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Does he know yet that you're married?

ALICE. No, and we're afraid he'll find it out. We agreed that I'd play I was Ned's model, so Uncle John wouldn't be suspicious, but that only made things worse.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Just leave me with him a few minutes again. I'll tell him a few things that will —

ALICE. Oh, mercy, no, Aunt Abigail. That would ruin everything. Uncle John mustn't find out now. We want to let him find out gradually, so he won't be so mad all at once.

AUNT ABIGAIL. Why didn't you confide in me?

ALICE. Well, you see —

AUNT ABIGAIL. Yes, I see. But it's too late to fuss now. You certainly pulled the wool over my eyes, but I don't care—as long as that silly old uncle is playing the fool.

ALICE. Then you'll help us fool Uncle John?

AUNT ABIGAIL. Certainly.

ALICE. And you won't mind playing the part of a model's aunt while he's around?

AUNT ABIGAIL. Not in the slightest, since it shows what a worthless old chump he is.

ALICE. They'll probably be back in a few minutes. You remain here, and I'll go see about the lunch. Remember you promised to help me, and pretend to be a model's aunt.

AUNT ABIGAIL. You can trust me. I never thought I could stretch my conscience enough to play the part of a model's aunt, but I'll do my best.

(ALICE exits, L.)

NED (*outside, r.*). I think you'll find her a good cook, all right.

(As NED and UNCLE JOHN enter, r., AUNT ABIGAIL crosses to L. C.)

UNCLE JOHN. I hope so.

NED. Where is Miss Westcott?

AUNT ABIGAIL (*courtesying*). She's gone to get some lunch, sir.

NED (*after gazing a moment in perplexity at AUNT ABIGAIL*). I would like to see her a moment.

(*Exits, l.*)

(After NED exits, UNCLE JOHN, r. c., and AUNT ABIGAIL, l. c., stand a few moments, each looking down-stage. Then UNCLE JOHN faces AUNT ABIGAIL. She ignores him. He then faces down-stage again, and AUNT ABIGAIL surveys him contemptuously.)

UNCLE JOHN. It's a fine day, ma'am.

AUNT ABIGAIL (*courtesying*). So it is, sir. (UNCLE JOHN surveys AUNT ABIGAIL a moment, smiling behind his hand, but again faces down-stage when she suddenly turns toward him. AUNT ABIGAIL surveys UNCLE JOHN, and smiles behind her hand, after which she again faces down-stage a moment.

AUNT ABIGAIL turns fiercely on UNCLE JOHN.) You —you — (Suddenly recalls, and hurriedly exits, L.)

UNCLE JOHN (takes a step or two after her). You —you — (Suddenly recalls and exits, R.)

(As UNCLE JOHN exits, NED and ALICE enter, L., and advance to c.; he at R., she at L.)

NED. Do you know, dear, I believe Uncle John will come around all right. If it were not for Aunt Abigail!

ALICE. How odd. I've felt just the opposite. I'm sure Aunt Abigail won't be very angry, but I'm awfully afraid of Uncle John. (They embrace.)

(AUNT ABIGAIL, L., and UNCLE JOHN, R., enter simultaneously. NED and ALICE separate.)

AUNT ABIGAIL (at left of ALICE). Niece, niece, aren't you ashamed of yourself to allow a young man to take you in his arms—even if he is a young artist?

UNCLE JOHN (at right of NED). You good-for-nothing scamp, don't you know better than to make love to your mistress, and you a mere good-for-nothing butler?

AUNT ABIGAIL (courtesying). Beg pardon, sir; you must be mistaken, sir.

UNCLE JOHN (bowing). Beg pardon, ma'am; I'm not, ma'am.

AUNT ABIGAIL (points to NED). He's not the butler, sir.

UNCLE JOHN. He is the butler, ma'am. (Angrily.) But he wouldn't be, if you weren't so confounded stubborn.

AUNT ABIGAIL. I'm not stubborn. It's you that's stubborn.

ALICE. We're lost.

NED. Maybe not. I've told Uncle John.

ALICE. And I've told Aunt Abigail.

UNCLE JOHN (to AUNT ABIGAIL). You know?

AUNT ABIGAIL. I know.

UNCLE JOHN (*extends hand*). Shake!

(UNCLE JOHN and AUNT ABIGAIL *shake hands in front of NED and ALICE, who embrace.*)

CURTAIN

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SISTER MASONs. A Burlesque in One Act, by FRANK DUMONT. For eleven females. Time, thirty minutes. Costumes, fantastic gowns, or dominoes. Scene, interior. A grand expose of Masonry. Some women profess to learn the secrets of a Masonic lodge by hearing their husbands talk in their sleep, and they institute a similar organization.

A COMMANDING POSITION. A Farcical Entertainment, by AMELIA SANFORD. For seven female characters and ten or more other ladies and children. Time, one hour. Costumes, modern. Scenes, easy interiors and one street scene. Marian Young gets tired living with her aunt, Miss Skinflint. She decides to "attain a commanding position." Marian tries hospital nursing, college settlement work and school teaching, but decides to go back to housework.

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